

Meeting Summary

Volusia County Expressway Authority Coalition

February 13, 2001

Ghyabi Lassiter & Associates, Inc.
555 W. Granada Boulevard, Suite C-12, Ormond Beach, Florida

Members Present:

Maryam H. Ghyabi
Karl Welzenbach
Joe Benedict
Jon Cheney

Brad Blais
Lori Campbell Baker
Charles Lydecker

Members Absent:

Linda White (excused)
Richard McMahan

Jim Ely (excused)
Doug Daniels

Others Present:

Darla Zakaluzny, Recording Secretary

Derek Catron

Chair Maryam Ghyabi called the meeting of the **Volusia County Expressway Authority Coalition** to order at 1:15 PM. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Chair Ghyabi stated that today's meeting is being held for the following reasons:

- (1) the structure of the presentation to the County Council;
- (2) should businesses/business leaders be asked to attend the County Council meeting and speak regarding this issue;
- (3) Mark Bernier wants to speak to her;
- (4) should the members of the Legislative Delegation be invited to the County Council meeting;
and
- (5) Harold Barley, METROPLAN Orlando's Executive Director, has been invited to attend the February 22 County Council meeting. Mr. Barley would be able to provide a regional perspective.

Chair Ghyabi also reported that Mr. Ely planned to attend the County Council meeting.

Chair Ghyabi stated that each member of the Coalition should participate in the presentation rather just the Chair. Mr. Welzenbach replied that the County Council tends to get bogged down and the meetings tend to run longer than is planned; therefore he suggested that the Chair give a five minute power point presentation which could highlight what was learned and what the recommendations are. All members could be in attendance in order to answer any questions the Council may have.

Chair Ghyabi stated that Mr. Lydecker and Ms. Campbell Baker could speak on the rating and financial aspect. She went on to say that Mr. Welzenbach could report on the MPO's data. Chair Ghyabi stated that this group has done a lot of work and this needs to be shown to the Council.

Mr. Welzenbach noted that the Council Members will be receiving the report this week and it has been on the web site since January. Ms. Campbell Baker stated that the report needs to be touched up so that everyone knows what was being done and why. She distributed copies of her proposed changes to the report.

Ms. Campbell Baker stated that she has spoken to the County Council Members and some of those members have asked if this is something that we really need to do right now. Chair Ghyabi noted that one comment she has heard is if you are recommending something, then you need to be more positive about it.

Mr. Blais asked how much time has been allocated for the presentation? Mr. Cheney replied that 15 minutes has been allocated for the presentation, plus whatever time the Council wants to discuss the issue. Mr. Blais recommended that Chair Ghyabi and Mr. Ely present the report to the Council instead of having several people speak.

Mr. Cheney suggested the following slides be included in the presentation:

- Coalition Members
- Meetings dates/speakers
- Conclusions/Recommendations

Chair Ghyabi recommended the following slides:

- Introduction
- Why the Coalition was created
- Coalition Members
- Schedule/Presentations
- Conclusion/Recommendations

Mr. Blais stated that it would also be a good idea to include the advantages and disadvantages as noted on page 22 of the Report. Ms. Campbell Baker suggested including any issues that have come up with the County Council members that are not covered in the presentation. She stated that one member had expressed concern about tapping into the gas tax again.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that he has met with Council Member McFall and Council Member Big John and he will be meeting with Council Member Lewis tomorrow. He stated that meetings with other members of the Council will be arranged for this week.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that one question raised that he has not been able to answer pertained to what control the County has over an expressway authority once it is formed. Mr. Cheney replied that it depends upon how the authority is formed.

Mr. Welzenbach replied that that pertained to whether or not it was formed under the Expressway Authority Act. He stated that the Expressway Authority Act does not delineate that. Mr. Welzenbach stated that the Act also says that the authority could have up to 9 members but in another paragraph it states that it could have up to 13 members.

Chair Ghyabi stated that she believes that the County Council would have the power over the expressway authority. Mr. Welzenbach replied that the County Council has the authority to create the expressway authority, but nothing in the legislation says that they could also suspend it.

Mr. Cheney stated that that is why it was decided that if one is formed it should be modeled after the Seminole County Expressway Authority. Mr. Welzenbach replied that that pertained to staffing only. He went on to say that Mr. Gerald Brinton had recommended that the model for the Seminole County Expressway Authority not be used if an authority was formed in Volusia County. Mr. Welzenbach noted that the contact from the Osceola County said the same thing. The County Commission that makes up the expressway authority and both are subject to political whims and whimsy, and they have suffered for it. Mr. Welzenbach stated that Mr. Brinton had also noted that if this was done, that it not be the County Council. If done under the Expressway Authority Act it would not be just the County Council, in fact, only two elected officials would be able to serve.

Chair Ghyabi stated that according to reports that she has seen, the expressway authorities are inactive but she has never seen it become dissolved. Mr. Cheney stated that this issue was not addressed by the Coalition. Chair Ghyabi replied that this was not addressed as it was not part of the group's job to find out how to create an expressway. She stated that she does feel comfortable making a recommendation to the County Council on how this should be done.

Chair Ghyabi stated that the Council would have to look into how this should be done if they determine that an expressway authority should be set up and it should be one that is most beneficial to the community.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that Council Member Northey had asked three questions when the group was first set up. Those questions are: is there a need, is one recommended, and what formation should the expressway authority take. Chair Ghyabi replied that when she went to the Council to request permission for this study she brought up three things (traffic problems, environmental and funding). She stated that there was no way that the group could address the environmental aspect, but the issue of traffic and funding could be looked at. Chair Ghyabi went on to say that this was never addressed as part of the County Council agenda -- and they should be the ones to look into it.

Mr. Welzenbach noted that the Broward County Expressway Authority is the only one that has been set up under the Expressway Authority Act.

Mr. Blais stated that there should be a bulleted item in the report that says while we are recommending the formation of an authority, the actual structure and charter should be dictated and determined by the County Council. Chair Ghyabi agreed.

Mr. Cheney stated that he does not recall looking into the actual makeup of different authorities - it is something unto itself. Mr. Welzenbach agreed that this was not done.

Mr. Cheney stated that the issue dealing with the staffing of the authority should be clarified within the final report (i.e. modeled after the staffing of the Seminole County Expressway Authority).

Mr. Cheney reminded the members that he would not be in attendance at the County Council meeting as he would be out of town, but he would still prepare the slide presentation material.

Mr. Benedict stated that it would be a good idea for the committee to request, after the presentation, that the County Council schedule a workshop on this issue. He stated that everyone from the Coalition should be at the presentation, including the business community if they are interested and then proceed from that point. Chair Ghyabi stated that if a workshop is held that would be great but she does not want to spend anymore time on the issue after February 22.

Discussion continued.

Mr. Lydecker stated that the County could access the Toll Revolving Trust Fund monies and pay it back after seven years and an expressway authority is not needed in order to borrow those funds. He questioned if there were other monies that could be accessed if there was an authority. Mr. Welzenbach stated that he had mentioned at the last meeting the fact that the money could be borrowed without having an expressway authority so why have one. He stated that the responses received sounded logical.

Mr. Welzenbach went on to say that an expressway authority allows for a political buffer between the public and the County Council; one group to focus on one issue; the employment of an expert (Executive Director) who knows about bonding issues, toll facilities, and traffic/revenue studies; and for continuity.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that an expressway authority with an Executive Director would provide the continuity and would make sure the accountability rests within one group's hand on a continual basis. Mr. Lydecker stated that it would be best to lay that out in advance that an expressway authority does not need to be in place in an effort to capture revenue for this specifically and then note the reasons why it is recommended.

Mr. Welzenbach replied that he does not know of any other monies that could be accessed for this issue. Mr. Lydecker stated that the environmental issue needs to be addressed in advanced. He stated that a statement could be made that this issue is not being addressed at this time, but it would be addressed when the appropriate body has been put into place. Mr. Lydecker provided some of the comments that he had received from Steve Kitner last week.

Chair Ghyabi stated that Mr. Kitner could be asked to attend the County Council meeting in case questions were raised on this issue. Mr. Cheney stated that Mr. Kitner should be asked to attend

but he could sit in the audience. Mr. Welzenbach noted that he had also spoken to Mr. Kitner who is not upset with the recommendation or the conclusion but he was upset that he was not involved.

Chair Ghyabi stated that she had told the County Council at the beginning that the Coalition would not be speaking about the environmental issue because one presentation would not cut it. There are many different groups that would be involved and they would all need to be involved, not just a portion of them.

Ms. Campbell Baker stated that if an authority is formed, it would be incumbent upon them to work with the environmentalists.

Chair Ghyabi clarified that she would give the introduction, membership and schedule portion of the presentation and Mr. Lydecker would present the recommendations and conclusions. Following the presentation there would be a question and answer period.

Chair Ghyabi suggested asking the local businesses to provide support for the study and participate at the County Council meeting. Mr. Benedict questioned whom Chair Ghyabi had involved in this so far? Chair Ghyabi replied that people have been involved as they have read and talked about it. Mr. Benedict stated that something needs to be orchestrated but it can not be done in a week's time.

Mr. Blais stated that it is a little late in the game to get endorsements from individual groups. Chair Ghyabi stated that the Chambers of Commerce have been involved and this is part of their legislative recommendations. Chair Ghyabi stated that the groups could be given a copy of the report and if they feel comfortable in providing support they could attend the County Council meeting.

Mr. Lydecker asked if the Coalition will be asking the County Council to take action next week? Mr. Welzenbach replied no, but a suggestion could be made that a workshop be held and they would probably want to have the members of the Coalition involved in the workshop.

Mr. Lydecker stated that next week may not be the forum for what Chair Ghyabi has in mind. He suggested that she contact Dwight Lewis on the matter and ask him what his expectations are and what he would like to see done. Chair Ghyabi stated that the people she has spoken to are ready to make a recommendation to go with it.

Mr. Benedict noted that a public hearing process would have to be undertaken. Chair Ghyabi replied that they could make a motion to start the process, whatever the process is. Mr. Welzenbach stated that he does not believe that the Council would do that next week. He stated that they would probably accept the report and ask a few questions and if they want to pursue it they would request that a workshop be held.

Mr. Welzenbach stated that three of the Council Members that he had spoken to had not yet read the report. Mr. Lydecker commended Mr. Welzenbach on the report.

Mr. Welzenbach questioned what would be done in regards to the report as Ms. Campbell Baker had additional comments. Ms. Campbell Baker replied that she did not know that this would be the final report. Mr. Welzenbach replied that everyone had agreed to have all comments in by last Friday. Ms. Campbell Baker apologized for missing the deadline.

Chair Ghyabi asked if an addendum to the report could be sent out? Mr. Cheney stated that if an addendum was to be made, now is the time to do it. He suggested including Ms. Campbell Bakers comments as the last slide in the presentation. Chair Ghyabi stated that Ms. Campbell Baker would like to see the changes made to the report.

Mr. Blais stated that it might be best to include a cover letter and then provide a copy of the changes with the cover letter and report. Mr. Cheney noted that there is a summary page that is included as part of the agenda package and that deadline was yesterday.

At this time the members reviewed the recommended changes submitted by Ms. Campbell Baker.

Mr. Lydecker moved to reinforce, with Mr. Welzenbach's permission as he has been the diligent author of the report, Ms. Campbell Baker's comments as they are well-founded. Ms. Campbell Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed with Mr. Welzenbach abstaining.

Discussion took place on where the items were to be inserted into the report.

The meeting adjourned at 2:21 PM.